• A E M2 S43 M4

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5 Ethiopia MP1

Table 1. Population Estimates of the 12 Ethiopian Provinces

Administrative Province	Area in Square Kilometers	Official estimate of population 1954	Ethnic Preponderance (author's comments) Language	Religion	Additional Remarks
Begemder	78,200	1,800,000	Amharic	Coptic	some border Muslim and highland Falashas.
Gojjam	62,900	1,600,000	Amharic	Coptic	some Agau (old Cushitic)speakers
Shoa	78,700	2,100,000	Amharic	Coptic	some Gurage-speakers
Tigre	67,000	1,000,000	Galla, Tigrina,	Coptic	
Wollo	78,700	1,000,000	mostly Galla	Coptic	some Amharic
Wollega	67,200	1,000,000	Galla,Amharic	Coptic	some border Shan-qalla(negroid, Ni-lotic-speaking)
Arussi	36,000	1,000,000	Galla	Muslim-"pagan"	
Hararge	404,000	1,600,000	Galla, some Somali	Muslim-"pagan"	some Somali semi-nomad tribes
Ilubabor	50,000	1,300,000	Galla, Nilotic old-Cushitic	"pagan"	many border Shan-qalla & other negroids
Kaffa	49,000	1,200,000	Galla,Nilotic old-Cushitic	"pagan"-Muslim	many border negroid
Gamu-Gofa	39,000	900,000	Sudanese,Galla	"pagan"	border negroids
Sidamo	102,000	1,250,000	old-Cushitic (Sidamo,Wollamo)	"pagan"	some nomadic border tribes
	1,110,000	15,750,000			
(Eritrea, federated 1952)	119,000	1,100,000	Bedja(Cushitic) Tigre(Semitic) Nilotic	Muslim Coptic	

554 635 Considerable reduction has been the lot of the title "ras", which in the past stood for not only military marshall, but often dynastic head of a province with private armies loyal only to him, and therefore often in competition with the throne. Of the old dynastic nobilities, the following heads still hold the title "ras":

Ras Kassa and Ras Imru, both kinsmen of the present emperor; Ras Haylu of the provincial dynasty of Gojjam, who is under close supervision; Ras Seyum of the provincial dynasty of Tigre, also under close control; Ras Gäbre Haywot of Dessie province, a kinsman of the present empress. A non-member of the old dynasties has been advanced to "ras" for loyal service: Ras Abebe, war hero and now minister of war.

554 562 Young noblemen who have mastered the art of horsemanship, as they are expected to, still assume a "war name", called "färäs sem" (lit. horse name), and name their favorite steed accordingly, much like medieval knights. For example, Emperor Menelik II could be politely addresses as "Abba Daño" (lit. Father of Judgment, his horse name) which he had assumed as a young man, after which his battle horse "daño" was named, and which flattered him both by emphasizing his position as the country's supreme ruler and judge, and by referring to his admired record as victor in many difficult battles. Emperor Haile Selassie I assumed the horse name "Abba Taqlay" (lit. he enveloped, i.e. the enemy) when a young nobleman, but no longer uses it.

631 Provincial administration can be summarized as
635 follows:

Table 6: The New, Centralized, Provincial Administration.

Location:	Administrator:	Staff:	
Provincial Capital-urban-center of province.	"täqlay gäj" (Governor-general) appoints lower office-holders; often absent, at court of Emperor.	appointed by cent. govt.; always in residence.	Secretary-general "wana tsähafi" appointed by central govt.; always in residence. Does most of routine adminis.
Administers mostly from provincial capital	"awraja gäj" governor of sub-province (e.g. 6 in Begemdir province) Appointed by Governor-general.	Appoints own staff.	
Administers from District capital.	"worëda gäj", district chief. (24 in Begemdir province) sometimes old "mislanë". Appointed by Governor-general	Appoints own staff.	
Administers from District capital.	"yämeketl worëda gäj" chief of about 1/10 of the district. (255 in Begemdir province). Position must be confirmed by Governor-general, through "däj tenat"	Appoints own staff.	
Administers from own village.	"cheqa shum" headman of "mändär" or "and debber agär". Confirmed by Governor-general.		Can improvise unpaid staff.

631 635 178 It is noteworthy that in this structure the Governor-general of the province is the only administrator permitted to appoint the next two highest officers of his own staff (since 1942). This is in line with the consistent development since 1916, when the present emperor, then regent, began the process of sweeping away the power of the top of the feudal-provincial pyramid. The "ras" gradually lost their private armies, and were expressly forbidden, by decree in 1942, to make treaties between provinces regarding boundaries or political or military matters.

[648] Contact with foreigners was also taken out of the exclusive jurisdiction of the Governor-general of the province, since foreigners going to the provinces require permits issued by the Ministry of Interior in Addis Ababa; these permits have to presented to the provincial administrators before local travel is allowed . Even the control over the "Kantiba", the mayors of the major towns, was taken from the Governor-general of the province, and invested, by decree of 1942, in the "Director of Municipalities" in the Ministry of Interior. This central control over municipalities was evident in 1953, when mayors were called to Addis Ababa by the Director of Municipalities, for a reprimand from the emperor for having permitted his boarding establishments at elementary schools, intended for war orphans, to become filled with the sons of well-to-do feudal nobility.

631 565 The feudal nobility, though much less powerful than in the past, plays a more informal, but still

671 [627] accumulate in a lifetime. The present price is usually Eth$1000.-.

[696] This practice is so strong that even at present a judge of a semi-modern court in Addis Ababa will suspend a prison sentence for involuntary manslaughter on condition that the murderer accumulate this sum and pay it to the victim's kinfolk--a wise decision preventing a new chain of murders. Recently a uniformed policeman in Addis Ababa, who was under this sentence for just that crime, made his tour among resident Europeans in the business district, begging money, with a letter in English explaining his need, signed by his own superior officer!

635 692 The absolute powers of the "ras" or "negus" in the past were limited only by the geographical boundaries of their effective military and administrative realms. All of them sat in judgment of their subjects, and combined legislative, judicial and executive powers in their persons. But each subject had the right to appeal directly to this highest authority against unjust treatment by a lower officer, provided he could throw himself in the path of the ruler and catch his attention. This right to "abyət" ("Hear me") continues to this day.

697 Nearly all "ras" and "negus" of the past maintained political prisons for their noble relatives who might become contenders to the throne. These prisons were not walled, but located on inaccessible mountain tops, "amba", and sometimes referred to as "wäheni". One such "wäheni" was located at a place called Geshan, in the old, smaller, Begemdir district, and was used by the kings of Gondar

2: Allen G-5 (1941) 1943 MP5 Amhara MP5

the triangle of mountains bounded on the north by the Dessie–Debra Tabor road; on the west by the canyon of the Blue Nile; on the east by the Strada Imperiale; and on the south by the Debra Markos–Addis Ababa road. Here Ras Kassa's Shoan fief of Salale adjoins his territories in Amhara Saint. Salale is a great grassy upland, in May already swept by rain storms for six or eight hours a day. The road to Addis Ababa passes through Ras Kassa's capital of Fiche, which has the usual character of Abyssinian country towns: an agglomeration of huts standing in rather dreary eucalyptus groves and dominated by a fort and the European villa of the Ras. Salale has the reputation of being the best horse-raising country in Abyssinia.

Fiche has a certain strategic importance in the feudal politics of Abyssinia since it lies across the main line of communication between the capital and Gojjam; and in the period of *coup d'état* in the '20s the lord of Salale was always in the position to intervene suddenly in the capital only 70 miles away.

Ras Kassa has always maintained his loyalty to the Makonnen house. He is a magnificent old veteran of war and politics, rugged and erect in spite of his advanced years. Ras Kassa's two elder sons, who had come in to discuss a truce with the Italians some months after the fall of Addis Ababa in 1936, were executed under circumstances of abominable treachery. Nevertheless the old Ras made himself responsible for the escort of the Agibar prisoners over about 150 miles of country without a single one of them coming to any harm.

I was fortunate in June and July in spending some time in Dessie and in making my way up to the Debra Tabor district where, in mid-July, the Italian garrison of some six thousand men surrendered. Dessie, which means "my joy" in Amharic, is an ideal base from which to study the incomparably beautiful country round. The former capital of Ras Michael, the Moslem father of the ex-Emperor Lij Iyasu, Dessie became the northern military headquarters of the Empire during the years preceding the Italian conquest. Dessie was favourably situated in relation to the Italian frontier in southern Eritrea, but it owed its strategic importance to the inner political situation. To the east and north-east along the line of the Eastern Escarpment overlooking the Danakil Depression and the Red Sea basin is the country of the turbulent Wagara Gallas who were, and who remain, a recurrent threat to internal security. The Wagara clans in fact lie athwart the main south-north route from Addis Ababa to Aduwa and the new and hardly less important motor road down the Escarpment and across the Danakil desert to Assab. During the years 1929–31, each autumn after the Great Rains, the Emperor had not less than thirty thousand men in the field engaged in more or less fruitless marches and counter-marches over the highlands of the Wagara country.

Scarcely less formidable were the great conservative lords of the north: Ras Gugsa of Makale, who afterwards went over to the Italians; Ras Seyum of Tigrai, ruling all the country between the upper Takkaze and the Eritrean border; and Ras Gugsa Wolye of Debra Tabor, an ex-husband of the Empress Zawditu, who himself had pretensions to the throne and the support of the powerful centre of the Coptic priesthood in Aduwa.

The last great feudal campaign in Ethiopia took place in 1931. The Im-

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE PROVINCES: GENERAL

PROVINCIAL DIVISIONS BEFORE 1935

635 Ethiopia has been presented hitherto from the centre and the provinces have been viewed outwards from Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the Emperor and the main scene of his reforms. To understand the difficulties that lay, and that still lie, before him in extending these reforms, it is necessary, in so far as the scanty and capriciously distributed information allows, to make some general study of provincial administration. The judicial and military aspects have already been discussed. As the conditions in the conquered provinces of the south differ in important features from those of the north, they will be treated separately, though it should be remembered that the north, as the ancient realm of the governing people, provides the dominant type of provincial administration and that the south represents a modification of this rather than an independent system.

For administrative purposes the country was divided into a large number of provinces and districts. The distinction between the two was not always clear, and their numbers and boundaries seem to have been altered frequently. The units were of uneven size and some of them appear to have followed either historical or geographical divisions or lines of tribal distribution. The great traditional northern divisions were modified by the later arrangements, but they were not obliterated to the same extent as were the old French provinces under Napoleon's administrative pattern.[1] Shoa, Gojjam, and Tigré, with its peculiar language, stood out from the rest for their size and importance, but

[1] No official maps of Ethiopia before 1935 are available, and map 1 has been made by F. de Halpert. It was necessary to include this in addition to the map of the 1945 divisions, not only because of its historical interest, but also because it contains some names of historical or tribal importance which have been dropped out of the new, simplified map.

[pp 1-261 not processed]

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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many of the smaller units retained, like them, much of their old historical and cultural identity.

The provinces do not fall very easily into administrative categories. The deepest distinction is that which has just been mentioned between the dominant Christian provinces of the old Ethiopia and those of the south which were, in the main, conquered by the Shoan dynasty during the second half of the last century. The dividing line runs approximately along the Blue Nile and across the middle of the modern Shoa, a little to the north of the capital. The region around the capital, though it lay just south of this line, may be regarded as having, since the reign of Sahla Selassié (1813), been progressively assimilated to Amharic society. In the vast area north of the line, below the structure of imperial power and that of the dominating and shifting ruling families there lay, still largely intact, the variegated social design of the Tigré and Amhara groups, closely interwoven with that of the ancient church and sanctioned by long custom. South of this line were Muslim and pagan people, many newly conquered, some of them partially disintegrated and dispossessed by their conquest, and all subject to a far more direct rule under the Shoan Emperor and his agents than was possible in the north. In both groups of provinces there were exceptional areas such as those of the northern Gallas, but it will be more convenient to give the Gallas a chapter to themselves as part of the south. The non-Galla southern provinces must be sub-divided into three groups, the Sidamo Hamites, the negro, and those Danakil and Somali regions, where the semi-desert nature of the country and the nomadic life of the tribes frustrated effective control by the Amharas. The northern provinces are sufficiently homogeneous for us to consider them, in very general terms, as a whole. A discussion of the administration of the provinces must be preceded by an attempt to assess the numbers and distribution of the people.

The main facts of the ethnology of the region have appeared in their place in the historical introduction, but it may be useful to bring together here some of these scattered facts. We saw that a mainly Hamitic (or Cushitic) population, with negro fringes and pockets, was dominated in successive southward moving stages by those northern groups which had been mastered and stimulated by Semitic emigrants from Arabia, and how this mixed Semitic-Hamitic people had gradually spread its domination over the northern half of the present boundaries to make the Ethiopian state and nation. It has been recounted how Christianity came in the fourth century and how the great movement of Galla peoples from the east and south-east, aided by the Muslim invasions of the sixteenth century, flooded into large areas of Ethiopia.

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643 the 600 years or more of which we have reliable knowledge, neither side until this century seems to have gained upon the other.

635 The crucial question was the appointment of the provincial governor. In theory his position was entirely dependent upon the Emperor. In all polities to which the word feudal can, in however general a sense, be applied, land tenure and land tribute were closely allied with the holding of office. It was the constant effort of the Emperors to insist both upon this connection and upon their right to grant and to withdraw both office and tenure. It is more convenient, however, so long as the complementary nature of the two is borne in mind, to deal first with the office of provincial governor and then with land-tenure and tribute.

Most European kings of the middle ages were obliged to recognize the right of great feudal nobles to the hereditary succession of large territorial lordships which were sometimes linked with high central offices and were, in practice, impossible to divide from great provincial powers. In Ethiopia, by contrast, few instances could be quoted in which provincial governors succeeded in passing on their positions and the lands which went with them for more than three or four generations. The most striking exception—one that goes far to prove the rule—was that of the ruler of Wag who, retaining in this conservative country something of the divinity which once had hedged his family, that of the original Zagwé dynasty which ousted the Solomonian line from its imperial authority, was allowed very special privileges. It is probable that with most ruling families, the laxity with regard to marital relations and legitimate succession, which, as we saw, obscured the imperial genealogy, was a deterrent to the building up of strong lineages.

The keynote is struck in one of the earliest examples, that given by Alvarez, of the great office of *Bahr-nagash*, ('king of the sea', i.e. the northern marches province near the coast). 'For in our time, which was a stay of six years', he writes, 'there were here four *Barnagais*, that is to say, when we arrived Dori was *Barnagais*; he died, and at his death the crown came to Bulla, his son, a youth of ten to twelve years of age, by order of the Prester John.[1] When they crowned him he was at once summoned to court, and while he was at the Court Prester John took away his sovereignty and gave it to a noble gentleman. . . . This man held it two years, and they took from him his lordship and made him the greatest lord of the Court . . . and the lordship of *Barnagais* was given to another lord. . . .'[2] And again, 'The Prester John deposes them and appoints them whenever he pleases, with or without cause. . . . I saw great lords turned out of their lordships, and others put into them,

[1] I.e. the Emperor. [2] Alvarez, pp. 52–3.

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and I saw them together, and they appeared to be good friends. (God knows their hearts.)'[1] 'And it is so usual', wrote d'Almeyda in the next century, 'for the Emperor to chop, change, and take . . . the lands any man has and to bestow them on another, that it is never thought much of, and very often one plows, another sows, and a third reaps.'[2] Yet practice was never quite the same as theory. The Emperor's claim to make grants of land and office depending solely upon his will waxed and waned according to the changing balance of the social and political forces. Thus we find Ludolphus, while stating the general rule, remarking that there were some prefectures which the Emperor would have to bestow upon another member of the same family. He names six of these, including that of the *Bahr-nagash* and the *Wag-Shum*. Ludolphus has more to tell of the Emperor's views on this question. 'Moreover they presume that Hereditary Dignity is an obstacle to Virtue; that Men are more certainly made, than born great; and that they will prove more faithful, whom they have raised from the Dust, than such as claim their fortunes from their Ancestors.'[3]

To trace the changing movements in this tug-of-war would require a recapitulation of the involved internal struggles, battles of kites and crows, which fill the chronicles and the political details of which are no more interesting than those of our Wars of the Roses. Only a few important phases need be picked out. From d'Almeyda and Ludolphus we must pass on to the eighteenth century, when the royal power fell very low. Ras Mikael of Tigré, who dominates Bruce's story as Satan dominates Paradise Lost, was not a man an Emperor could dismiss; on the contrary he himself dismissed, and, indeed, murdered, more than one Emperor. At this time, even the Gallas of Damot could insist upon the son of the former Galla governor succeeding to the governorship and they killed the Emperor's uncle who was sent to take over the province.[4] The kingdom of Shoa, as we saw in the historical introduction, was all but independent, and though its rulers paid lip service to the King of Kings in Gondar, none of these dared challenge the solid power and hereditary succession of this dynasty.

The Galla mayors of the palace at Gondar struggled to raise the power of the decadent Solomonian rulers. One of these attempts to curb the growth of hereditary succession to offices and lands and to make a bid for the favour of the people against their lords, is of special interest in our context. Ras Gugsa passed the following decree in 1800:

'The land belongs to God. Man has only its usufruct. He fertilizes it by his labours: he passes: it swallows him and grows green again in

[1] *Ibid.*, p. 93. [2] Tellez, p. 63. [3] Ludolphus, p. 235.
[4] Jones and Monroe, pp. 122–3.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
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Gojjam when its king, Takla Haimanot, died in 1901. He wished to break up this large kingdom, but he did so only partially, leaving the eastern part to the son of the dead king. He also made it a habit to keep powerful chiefs waiting about at court, a favourite method of French kings and one that Theodore had applied to him in his own youth. The *Wag-Shum* was again deprived of his ancient hereditary succession by the Empress Taitu, in favour of her own nominee; but the *Shum* was later restored. As Menelik's physical power declined, so did his control until, during his last years, the provincial governors again became largely independent. Imperial authority over the governors declined still further under the unstable Lij Yasu, and was only very gradually restored in a new form by Haile Selassié. 175

We have seen that even the present Emperor had to pay some attention to the hereditary position of great families in those northern regions which had a traditional jealousy of Shoa and in which opposition and rebellion were most likely to appear. In his early days as Regent the provincial governors still remained very independent. Ras Hailu, for instance, did not come near the capital for years. Provincial tribute was very low. Chiefs were allowed to rule the country with which their family had been associated until some misdeed or act of disloyalty brought deposition. Hence Haile Selassié confirmed Ras Hailu in his father's position in Gojjam, and punished his contumacy with disinheritance and imprisonment only later when he was strong enough for this action. Similarly he felt obliged to confirm Ras Seyum in his ancestral lordship of Tigré. It was the decision to grant Ras Seyum, at the expense of his cousin *Dejazmach* Haile Selassié Gugsa, the lion's share of the family lands, which threw the latter into the arms of the Italians in 1935. Ras Gugsa Wallié's position in the provinces of Lasta and Bagemdir was based upon family connections, and when he was killed during his rebellion in 1930 the substitution of Ras Kassa was appropriate because of his connection with the former rulers of Lasta through his mother. Ras Kassa's son was made governor of Bagemdir in 1942 in recognition, presumably, of the family connection.

The present Emperor himself might be given as the representative of a branch of the royal line which has held the great province of Harar since his father Ras Makonnen conquered it and was confirmed in its lordship by his cousin Menelik. The lands and governorship of this province were inherited by Makonnen's eldest son and, upon his death, went to the younger brother, Tafari. Though Lij Yasu, when he came of age, transferred this potential rival to a south-west province, Tafari had left behind him in Harar an army that was loyal to his house, and when the clash came it rallied to him and Lij Yasu lost his throne. 643 [635]

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THE GOVERNMENT OF ETHIOPIA

[643] Harar is now ruled over by the Emperor's second son. While it is clearly difficult to deduce constitutional rules from conflicts at this level, turning our glance to a lower one we may note that in addition to the few examples of continuity, many others could be given of frequent changes of governorship, even in the north, by both Menelik[1] and Haile Selassié. These would illustrate their ability to act upon these rights in this way, at those times in their reigns when they were strong enough to do so.

It is interesting to consider more closely the exact position as to the distribution of governorships on the eve of the Italian invasion. For convenience the south, which must be discussed in somewhat more detail later, has for this purpose been included with the north. According to an authoritative Italian writer, the number of provinces was thirty-two; of these, six might be regarded as being headed by governors of local hereditary status. They were Wag, Tigré (divided between two local notables), Wallaga, the small region of Beni-Shangul under local Muslim governors, and Salale under Ras Kassa. Eastern and southern Shoa was a royal dominion; Wallo, Harar, and Ogaden were also personal fiefs of the Emperor governed by his sons. The remaining twenty-one provinces were all under the Emperor's men, governors appointed by him from among his closest relatives and supporters, including a few of the 'new' younger and more progressive officials.[2] This analysis would suggest that, by the end of the first part of his reign, Haile Selassié, as far as appointments of governors were concerned, had succeeded in controlling very directly some two-thirds of the country.

631 Mr. de Halpert, however, in information supplied to the writer, is critical of these categories as being too exact. He points out that in the 635 Ethiopia of 1935 it was almost impossible to say which division was a province and which a district. Tigré, Shoa, and Gojjam, as ancient kingdoms, were really subdivided into a number of administrative districts. He would also dispute the exact significance of some of the appointments. Without discussing these points in further detail, it may at least be assumed that the provinces and districts could be roughly divided into those that were more and those that were less closely under imperial control and that the former were the more numerous and were upon the increase.

THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR

635 The governor then, according to theory, was appointed and dismissed

[1] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 487.

[2] Zoli, 'L'Impero Italiano dell'Africa Orientale', *Bollettino della R. Societa Geografica Italiana*, series VII, vol. 1, no. 8, pp. 473–84.

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by the Emperor and was his representative in the province. His exact title varied. He might rise to the height of that of *Negus*; he might be a ras. More frequently in recent years he held the next title in rank, that of *dejazmach*. He was paid no salary. He paid himself, his entourage, and his soldiers from the tribute of the province. On the pecuniary side, in addition to the tithes and other tribute, he collected the profits of justice and the tolls on the borders of his province. The tolls being collected from the merchants would be one of his few sources of cash, especially before this century.[1]

It has already been said that no estimate is possible of the proportion of tribute passed on by the governors to the Emperor. It seems probable, however, that where any tribute was paid the amount varied according to the arrangements made between the Emperor and the governor and probably also, from time to time, according to the needs and the power of the Emperor and the advisability of appeasing him with tribute. It is certain that large caravans taking rich gifts of cloth, horses, mules, and gold ceased long before this century to come in to the Emperor from any of the northern provinces.[2]

The governor, especially if he were a local grandee, was a very great man. The Ethiopians, like many other peoples, love the trappings of power. It was the ambition of most men to wear fine clothes and to have at least one or two slaves or servants to run beside the stirrup. The governors naturally aimed at reproducing as far as they could the style of the Emperor's palace. They lived at the highest level they could afford, each with a court of his own and a circle of officials of his own appointment, whose titles were current only in the province. When they gave out lands and offices to their followers they tried, like the Emperor, to prevent these becoming hereditary and aimed at unsettling their holders from time to time.[3] Ethiopians tended to gravitate round the households of a great man with its hospitality, its atmosphere of movement, of security and opportunity. The governor's headquarters would be crowded with supporters, suitors, the soldiers of his personal bodyguard, priests, musicians, jesters, servants, and slaves. Upon festivals he kept open house and like his Emperor gave great feasts of raw meat and mead. A description of the lavish hospitality of the Ras of Angote given in the sixteenth century[4] reads almost word for word the same as those of the entertainments described by other travellers 400 years later.

When a governor travelled, especially upon taking up or leaving his appointment, it was a serious affair for the country upon which he

[1] Rüppel, E., *Reise in Abessinien*, Frankfurt, 1838–40, vol. 2, p. 35.
[2] See above, pp. 191–3. [3] Hotten, pp. 145–6. [4] Alvarez, pp. 136–7.

635 661 lived in passing and upon which he could levy purveyance. His passage was an affair of pomp, in which important ladies had to be considered and a retinue taken, which might swell to many hundreds of soldiers and servants with all their families, slaves, and transport animals. Such journeys were veritable expeditions, not to be undertaken lightly. A journey right across the country might take several weeks, and in parts the rains made travel laborious or impossible for some five months of the year. The difficulty of communication gave the governor an independence of which he made full use. Governors of ancient divisions with a tradition of autonomy and governors from the royal family were generally allowed to rule with little interference. In this century 177 206 507 the main provincial capitals were connected with Addis Ababa by telephone and this, with aeroplanes, which were just beginning to come into use before 1935, were the first threats to the isolation of the governors, which has since, in most parts, been so greatly diminished by the Italian roads. The Emperor had his agents who kept a watch upon governors and reported upon their doings; this kind of espionage was a highly developed system in Ethiopia. The governors on their side kept representatives in the capital. But this did nothing to overcome what several observers have remarked as the besetting sin of Ethiopian administration, the refusal to take any constructive responsibility. Governors of the old school were mainly concerned with the conservation of their own power, the collection of their tribute, and the fulfilment of their military duties. It would have been quite outside their range of thought to initiate new ideas of reform or to put down time-honoured abuses. Some of the governors spent much of their time at Addis Ababa and their deputies tended to be even more conservative in their use of authority than their masters.

635 Although the emphasis here is upon administration, it must not be forgotten that the governor was historically and in Ethiopian eyes primarily a high military officer and his civil duties were no more than the necessary accompaniment of his command. He had—as was shown anew in 1935—to raise and lead his provincial army in war. Some description has, however, already been given of the army, and there will be no need to discuss it further in this chapter except in the next section in relation to land tenure.

622 THE VILLAGE CHIEF

We have seen that by 1935 it was rare for a great local landed potentate to hold the highest provincial office; in most instances this was held by the Emperor's nominees. But this was not the only link the Emperor

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423 when combined they represented the most coveted of all tenures as well as the one most weakening to the imperial authority.

From the different kinds of grant made to the various classes, the governors, the churches, the soldiers and others, for various purposes, arose the many categories of land tenure.

THE GOVERNOR AND THE LAND

635 651 661 423 The position of the provincial governor was relatively simple. He collected the whole of the Emperor's tribute within the province (in so far as this had not already been granted away by a process which will be examined presently), and he used it for the support of his administration, which meant of himself, his deputies, judges, messengers, and above all, the soldiery. As we have seen in the chapter upon public finance, it is impossible to generalize upon the proportion of tribute which the governor sent on to his Emperor except that it varied with the distribution of power at any given time between the two of them, and in the north might range from the refusal by a distant and almost autonomous governor to send anything but perhaps a token payment to the large tributes in kind and in money which are described by observers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

It is frequently stated in the European accounts of Ethiopia that the office of governor, like all other offices, was sold by the Emperor and by this method, injurious as it was, he would be sure of at least some return. He would also have an interest in frequent changes of office; the governor's interest would consequently be in extorting all he could from his province as rapidly as possible. 'They are generally more like robbers than governors', was the conclusion of one witness.[1] 'The governors purchase their Commissions, or to speak properly their privilege of pillaging the Provinces" concludes another.[2] 'You are governor of Ras el Feel', the Emperor's secretary announced to Bruce. 'I hope you will never see it. It is a hot, unwholesome country, full of Mahometans, but its gold is as good as any Christian gold whatever.'[3]

That these exactions continued into Haile Selassié's day was shown by the measures he took in his endeavours to reform the provincial administration. These exactions would certainly be less in the northern provinces where the governor was dealing with an ancient society, that of his own people, in which all relationships and tributes were sanctified by long established custom.

The governor would parcel out the tribute he controlled amongst his many lieutenants in the districts and amongst his own and the Emperor's

[1] Tellez. p. 53. [2] Lobo, *op. cit.*, p. 263. [3] Bruce, vol. 3, p. 365.

1 [not processed - Analyst]

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

soldiers. He would also have, like the Emperor, official estates set aside for the upkeep of his large household and it would be these he would be most anxious to retain if he lost his governorship. For these estates he could call up the labour of soldiers and *gabars*.[1] Parkyns recorded in the mid-nineteenth century that for his estates the governor could exact one day's work for clearing, one for sowing, two for cleaning, and two for harvesting, and this was still the custom in this century.[2] Instead of cultivating his estates directly by using labour in this way, the governor might lease his land to tenants who would pay him a stated proportion of the crop as rent. According to one authority in the north, governors claimed that one tenth of all privately owned land should also be cultivated for him and he would himself choose the lands. Where, as in Tigré, the governorship tended to remain for a period in the same family this was not so grave an injury to the province, but if a governor from outside were sent in the people might not dare to demand back the lands from the local family and were obliged to set aside new lands for their new governor.[3] Besides the governor's estates there would be others attached to the various offices of his assistants.

In addition to their more regular dues from the people it was customary for governors and their assistants to demand special gifts from time to time, such as a sheep from each village at Easter and at the festival of the true cross.

THE CHURCH AND THE ARMY

The Emperors were always extremely generous to the church, even if they had not gone so far as to allocate that third of the original legend which the famous cleric Takla Haimanot claimed in 1270. Every priest, monk, *debtera*, and deacon, in so far as he was excused from the work of the fields, required that land furnished with slaves or *gabars* should be set aside for his support. A vast total of land was burdened with this service. The piety of Emperors warred here with their political interests—at one moment they were moved to give, at another to resume their gifts. But it was not easy to assert the royal claim against monasteries which were undying corporations or against churches which needed permanent endowment and were, moreover, served by priests determined to pass on their lands with their offices to their sons. Moreover, the very character of the grants protected them. Their most

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–91.
[2] Parkyns, M., *Life in Abyssinia*, 1853, vol. 2, p. 230. Also Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[3] Rossini, pp. 107–8.

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[For historical information on the region of Manz in Shoa Province, along with its succession of leaders, its warfare with the Galla, and internal strife, see category 175.]

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

dolphus put it.[4] At length, unable to witness the further decimation of his people because of religious controversies, Susneyos abdicated in favor of his son Fāsil. Fāsil lost little time in deporting the Jesuits and restoring the Orthodox status quo.

175* 648 797 643

Recovery

In the wake of all these collisions, Ethiopia made two valiant attempts to regain equilibrium and glory: through the splendor of Gondar in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, and through the force of three emperors of the nineteenth century—Tēwodros II, Yohānnes IV of Tigre, and Menelik II of Shoa.

175* 648 643

Gondar was founded as a new and stationary capital by Fāsil. It served as imperial headquarters for many generations. Later, the kingdom of Tigre knew a resurgence of power that led to control of the empire under Yohānnes (1872–89). His castle at Makalle symbolized one last rally for the north—after an interregnum of a thousand years—before being eclipsed by the Shoan throne.

The shock which began with the invasions of Ahmad Grañ shattered Ethiopia's medieval synthesis once and for all. The political consequence of those disruptions was an increase in provincialism, reaching its climax in the famous "Age of the Princes" (1755–1855) when each province had its own sovereign and for all practical purposes was a polity unto itself. The Solomonic line, the matrix of Ethiopian political unity, was splintered in several directions, leaving contenders in each of the provinces. Though the official imperial line remained at Gondar, Tigre was able to reassert its ancient claims and Gojjam recurrently voiced its separatism, and what may be called the "House of Manz" came to compete with Gondar as a center of national consciousness.

175* 178 635

This political division was accompanied by a peculiar cultural bifurcation. Elements of the national culture that had been rather evenly distributed before Ahmad Grāñ now became relatively specialized in Gondar and Manz. The recovery of Ethiopia produced a geographical division of manners and morals as well as several lines of Solomonic royalty.

175* 184

HISTORICAL PROFILES

The Role of Gondar

175* 633

Gondar is the only city in Ethiopia with charm and character expressive of Amhara culture. Even today, despite modern accretions, the remnants of its castles, walls, bridges, and sanctuaries transmit a stately calm, redolent of past nobility and African grandeur.

175* 361

The town is situated on a flat volcanic ridge at seven thousand feet above

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

tical character of Gondar has been implanted deeply enough so that one young Gondarē, commenting on the absence of dance halls such as are found in other Ethiopian cities, remarked: "This place is one big monastery."

In accord with Haile Selassie's program of centralization, the chief provincial administrators in Gondar are not local men. This has created a subtle problem for the national government. The Gondarēs cannot forget that their city was the capital of Ethiopia for more than two hundred years. They view the Shoans as political upstarts and love to refer to the Shoan Amhara as "Galla." As a result, Shoans in high offices at Gondar have found themselves boycotted by the natives. Their wishes have frequently been ignored by local subordinates or the local populace. They have not been invited to take part in the social life of the Gondarēs. All this has made the lot of Shoan emissaries in Gondar frustrating and lonely.

In order to increase the Gondarē's identification with the national government, its representatives in Gondar have tried in various ways to assert the symbolic supremacy of Addis Ababa. The traditional site for celebrating the festival of Masqal—the great sycamore near Fāsil's castle—has been shifted to the modern Haile Selassie I Square. An imposing sculpture is to be placed over the tomb of Nagāssi, and a principal street in Gondar has been named after him. Plans are afoot to outshine the traditional marketplace with one enhanced by modern facilities, to be named Haile Selassie I Market.

Despite the evident satisfaction with which one Shoan administrator noted that "the Gondarēs are not so proud any more," even for Shoa's purposes the traditional prestige of Gondar cannot be completely eradicated. The government gains much profit by extolling Ethiopia's long history. The flight to Gondar has become a standard part of the itinerary for foreign dignitaries. Gondar remains, after the stelae of Aksum and the monoliths of Lalibela, the most impressive visible reminder of the Ethiopian past.

Manz Today

The accession of the House of Manz to the throne of Ethiopia has given Manz much prestige in the national capital. Because Menelik and his successors filled the government with people from their home area, numerous higher officials of the imperial Ethiopian government are also of Manzē origin. Partly for these reasons, partly because of their scanty knowledge of Ethiopian geography, many Ethiopians born and raised in Addis Ababa claim to be of Manzē ancestry, even though their families may in fact have come from Merhābētē or Bulgā or other parts of Shoa.

Due to the close tie between the present imperial family and the homeland of Manz, a special affection persists between Haile Selassie and the Manzēs. The latter are said to have a standing invitation at the palace, including the

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

bəǰirond	guardian of royal property, treasurer (two)
liqa makuās	king's double and keeper of the king's mule
*ägäfäri**	protocol officer, superintendent of banquets

The status of these dignitaries may have been particularly vulnerable, depending so closely as it did on the whims of the monarch. Nonetheless their proximity to the center of imperial power gave them unique advantages. They were in a position to receive many gifts for favors and influence, as well as to come by some part of the royal revenues and to attend the royal banquets. They were consulted, together with military commanders, provincial governors, and high ecclesiastics, on important matters of state. Lands granted to them for their services enabled them to support small retinues of their own, including, in some cases, military contingents. They were normally an important factor in promoting stability and continuity during the troubled moments that usually followed the death of an emperor.[26]

The above classification of titles is meant only to provide a quick overview of their variety; no such formal compartmentation existed in the Abyssinian perspective. All the titles converged into a single hierarchy.[27] What is more, titles were not strictly connected to offices or functions, so military titles were frequently given to court or civil functionaries. This was particularly true of the court of Menelik, where, for example, the Superintendent of Royal Tents bore the title *bälämbärās* and the Chief Hand-washer that of *gerāsmāch*.[28] For centuries before, moreover, provincial governors were often known by military rather than civil titles, and men holding civil titles were liable to be called to take part in military campaigns by the sovereign.

The sociological reality underlying this overlapping of titles among the nobility was the essentially unspecialized nature of their role. The ideal type of the *makuānnent* was at once governor, soldier, and courtier. In time of war he set forth at his own expense, with his own troops, to support the cause of the emperor, or perhaps simply to defend his own regional interests. In time of peace he might sojourn, if permitted, at the court of his king or overlord, eating and drinking with his peers, giving counsel to his liege when asked, engaged in intrigue and otherwise seeking to improve his station.

When not active in warfare or the affairs of court, the nobleman would repair to his lands to supervise the agricultural production and the collection of rents from his tenants. The emperors rewarded nobles who served them with grants of land. The higher chieftains in turn rewarded their own followers accordingly. These estates were usually held *in absentia*, the peasants

* *Ägäfäri* is an important title in the courts of provincial lords but is not mentioned in the court list of Iyāsu I, nor in that of the *Sər'ātu Mangest*.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

reverted to the Crown unless specifically reconveyed to the heir by royal proclamation. Political office was no less precarious. Governors were made and unmade—by the traditional process known as *shum-shir* ("appoint-demote")—in short periods of time. The powerful position of governor of the maritime province (*bähr negäsh*) changed hands four times during the six years that Alvares spent in Ethiopia. Even when tradition assigned a certain post to the descendants of a certain lord, the emperors were able to exert control by shifting their favor from one descendant to another from year to year. Titles, unlike land and office, were granted for life, as we observed; but they were in no case hereditary, and thus every Abyssinian's hope for a title, let alone a raise in rank, depended on the grace of the king or of his major appointees.

Given these conditions, it was not possible for the nobility to become a closed, hereditary estate, or to develop a corporate identity capable of confronting the imperial will. On the contrary, thanks to the emperor's freedom to ennoble anyone whom he chose, there was a relatively high degree of social mobility, and the ranks of the upper strata were continuously being reshuffled.

Outstanding personal properties of various sorts often enabled Ethiopians of low birth to rise to high positions. The emperors and great lords conferred honors on those who served especially well in military expeditions, whatever their origins. Menelik's promotion of two Galla prisoners to rank as his highest generals is a famous case in point. The royal favor occasionally smiled on low-born Ethiopians who excelled in such qualities as physical beauty or witty repartee.[83] Unquestionable personal loyalty was another quality in high demand; freed slaves were sometimes given offices and dignities, since their lack of ties to political families made them particularly trustworthy.

Abyssinians have thus cherished the idea that they could rise to a higher station in life than that to which they were born. Comparatively few ever tried to do so, probably, but ambitious souls were never wanting. Seeking some benefice, or the glory of a title, or a position of power that would permit them to help their kinfolk or avenge themselves for a wrong suffered at the hands of some superior, they would attach themselves to the lord whose fortunes seemed brightest at the moment and hope, by valorous service and God's favor, to arrive someday at an estimable position.[84]

Nevertheless, though ability and fortune might carry any man high in the political hierarchy, he would not thereby automatically be accepted as one of the *makuännent*. A self-respecting man of noble family would resist marrying his daughter to a commoner or person of dubious parentage, no matter how high a rank the latter obtained. For the Abyssinian nobility did form a self-conscious status group with a certain hereditary base. Its members shared a sense of superiority, a consciousness of kind, and an attitude toward commoners such as that expressed by the governor Takla Giyorgis to the Jesuit

12:Young E-4,5 (1966) 1971 MP5 Amhara MP5
Begemder

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Preferred
[243] cereals cannot be grown here, instead sorghum, finger millet, and white tef (Eragrostis teff; an indigenous, tiny-grained cereal) are produced. Moreover, the civil [635] administration of the kola is less effective than in the highlands. Of the three zones, kola is the most sparse-[162] ly populated, and the only one to contain a substantial [563] indigenous non-Hamitic population. These are a Nilotic [567] people, horticulturalists living on the province's western periphery. Highlanders refer to them by a putative tribal nomer, "Shankella", and, until recent times, obtained their domestic slaves from this population. Even now, Nilotes living in the highlands are popularly known as bariya, "slave".

Weyna dega lands are located between 1800 and 3000 [136] meters. This is parkland beyond the range of the ano-[243] pheles mosquito, and ideal for growing preferred cereals, [231] wheat and red teff. Here, as in the other zones, agriculture is complemented by the raising of sheep, goats, and chickens for food; cattle for meat, milk, and plowing; donkeys to carry burdens across the broken plateau lands; and horses and mules as mounts.

Dega lands are the sections of the plateau which [243] extend beyond the 3000 meter mark. In their lower reaches, wheat and red teff are grown, but at higher altitudes [233] barley is the dominant cereal. The lands above 4000 meters cannot be cultivated, although some are used for grazing.

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635 Parish and Hamlet. The highland zones can be di-
*[192] vided along three complementary social dimensions---po-
litical, ecclesiastical, and economic. Politically, the
province is divided into awraja (sub-province), warada
632 (district of a sub-province), and meketel warada (sub-
361 district). The meketel warada consists of fifteen to
*[192] thirty parishes (deber). The parish, in turn, is com-
posed of three to ten hamlets (mender), each consisting
592 of ten to fifty households (bet). Most households con-
sist of husband, wife, unmarried sons, and pre-pubscent
daughters[11]; a minority of households consist of aged
spouses only, or of widowed individuals living by them-
592 selves. Characteristically, the households of a hamlet
361 are dispersed, so that any one is perhaps 100 to 300
meters from its closest neighbors.

647 While officials of the provincial and sub-provin-
cial governments are generally out-landers appointed by
the central government, administrators of the warada
and meketel warada are usually members of the local gen-
*[192] try. Within the parish, civil administration is in the
hands of the ceka Sum, a petty administrator who imple-

[582] [11] Since it is common for a girl to marry at 11 or
[591] 12, but to delay the virilocal move until age 15 or 16,
the natal household may include a married daughter.